



INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

Independence Day

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2006

"Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."
words written on the Liberty Bell



Independence Day is celebrated on July 4 because that is the day when the Continental Congress adopted the final draft of the Declaration of Independence. However, America's official split from Britain's rule and the beginning of the American Revolution took far longer than a single day. The original resolution was introduced by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia on June 7, 1776, and called for the Continental Congress to declare the United States free from British rule. Three days later a committee headed by Thomas Jefferson was appointed to prepare an appropriate writing for the occasion. Until the next month, the document was read publicly and people celebrated whenever they heard it. The War of Independence dragged on until 1783, and in that year, Independence Day was made an official holiday. 1941 Congress declared 4th of July a federal holiday. July 4th was the day singled out to mark the event of the United States establishing itself as a nation.

An American flag flies on the USS (United States Ship) Constitution, while she sails the annual Fourth of July Turnaround Cruise in Boston harbor. (© AP/WWP)

Independence Day is one of only four American holidays that are still celebrated on their proper calendar days, the other being Halloween, Christmas and New Year's Day. Of all the secular holidays, the Fourth of July is the only one whose celebration date resists change. The feeling about the sanctity of America's Independence day was best expressed in a quotation from the Virginia Gazette on July 18th, 1777: *"Thus may the 4th of July, that glorious and ever memorable day, be celebrated through America, by the sons of freedom, from age to age till time shall be no more. Amen and Amen."*

For more information visit the following web resources:

Independence Day at FirstGov.gov - the U.S. government's official web portal
http://www.firstgov.gov/Topics/Independence_Day.shtml

Independence Day at the White House
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/independenceday>

Fourth of July Celebrations: Food and Drinks, History, Ways to Celebrate
<http://www.fourth-of-july-celebrations.com/>

July 4th: Celebrating Independence Day in the United States
http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/holidays/july_4.html

Teacher Planet: Independence Day Theme Page
(gateway to the lesson plans and resources)
<http://www.teacherplanet.com/resource/independence.php>

ReadWriteThink: Lesson Plan: Myth and Truth: Independence Day
http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=153

Education World® : Holidays Center: Independence Day
<http://www.education-world.com/holidays/archives/independence.shtml>

4th of July - Independence Day resources
<http://www.usacitylink.com/usa/>

The National Archives: The Declaration of Independence
<http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/declaration.html>

Wikipedia: Independence Day (United States)
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_Day_\(United_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_Day_(United_States))

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE SYMBOLS

The Liberty Bell

The Liberty Bell is one of the central symbols of American independence from British rule. This historical icon has a rich history that began when the Pennsylvanian Assembly ordered the casting of the bell back in 1751.

http://www.fourth-of-july-celebrations.com/html/liberty_bell.html

The National Anthem

The American National Anthem, known as the Star-Spangled Banner, was written by Francis Scott-Key in 1814. The song was an immediate hit with American revolutionaries due to its ability to inspire patriotism. However, it wasn't until 1931 that the Star-Spangled Banner officially became the American National Anthem.

http://www.fourth-of-july-celebrations.com/html/national_anthem.html

America the Beautiful

Every so often a movement is started to make "America the Beautiful" the national anthem instead of "The Star-Spangled Banner," largely because it was not written as a result of a war. The tune is easier to sing and the whole country is praised, not only the flag. Katherine Lee Bates, an English professor at Wellesley College, is the author a poem that became the first verse of the song. The music is a hymn by Samuel Ward.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/America_the_Beautiful

Yankee Doodle

Strangely, this patriotic song has derogatory origins. The music and words go back to 15th century Holland, as a harvesting song that began, "Yanker dudle doodle down." In England, the tune was often used for a nursery rhyme. But it was a British surgeon, Richard Schuckburgh, who wrote the words, which ridiculed the ragtag colonists. Soon after, the British troops used the song to make fun of the colonists in the Revolutionary War. Yet it became the colonists' rallying anthem for that war.

<http://www.contemplator.com/america/ydoodle.html>

Uncle Sam

Although the name Uncle Sam has been a key aspect of American culture, no one is sure to whom the title originally refers. The modern-day image of Uncle Sam, the white-bearded man sporting a top hat and pin-striped pants, was made popular by the cartoonist Thomas Nast. His depiction has come to encapsulate the image of patriotism and American pride.

http://www.fourth-of-july-celebrations.com/html/uncle_sam.html

The text of this newsletter is based on excerpts from:

<http://www.fourth-of-july-celebrations.com/html/history-of-july-4th.html>

<http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/Holidays/celebrate/independ.html>

http://usinfo.state.gov/photogallery/index.php?album=/July_4/2005&image=flag_ship.jpg